

— CEREAL THRILLERS! — The Crop Circles of '96

England's crop circles are back again, and this season's designs are bigger, more bountiful and more beautiful than ever.

But who or what made them, and what do they mean?

by Marcus Allen

NEXUS Magazine (UK Office)
55 Queens Road, East Grinstead
West Sussex RH19 1BG, UK
Telephone: +44 (0)1342 322854
Fax: +44 (0)1342 324574

Photographs by Stephen Alexander ©1996

There are always doubts. Every April, the same question is asked among crop circle enthusiasts: "Will there be any formations this year?" 1996 was no different. Winter was long in England, and spring was wet, but by mid-May the question was answered: "They're back again."

As usual, the season started the same way: a few simple circles and rings in a variety of crops—oilseed rape, barley and wheat. By mid-June, nothing special had been reported to the only monthly crop circle publication, *SC (Sussex Circular)*, which had just six circles listed.

On the morning of Monday 17th June, everything changed. One of the most spectacular designs ever to appear was seen in East Field, Alton Barnes, Wiltshire—the site of numerous formations in previous years, but none so intricate as this. Immediately named "DNA" from its obvious similarity to the DNA double helix, the formation measured 648 feet in length and consisted of 90 separate circles ranging from two feet to 50 feet in diameter. The 'tramlines' were about 50 feet apart, made by tractors carrying crop-spraying equipment with booms extended on both sides. Farmers in England very rarely use aerial spraying.

Enquiries by the many crop-circle researchers already packing out the legendary Barge Inn at Honeystreet—the ultimate destination for any self-respecting 'croppie' (see NEXUS 2/28)—soon established some important details. East Field had been watched until 1.00 am that morning; no one had been seen to enter. Dawn was at 4.30 am. The formation was first reported at 6.30 am by an employee of the farmers, Tim and Polly Carson.

Ground inspection revealed beautifully swirled circles, with no damage to the crop other than that it now lay horizontally. Aerial photographs were taken by 10.00 am and showed the truly spectacular nature of the design.

Several national newspapers in England carried large pictures of the "DNA" formation, with reports which reflected the genuine bewilderment felt by many as to its creation: 90 circles in less than five hours (one every three minutes!), no mistakes, and mainly created in darkness. The Carsons issued a challenge: "If anyone can claim to have made it, then do it again alongside the original." No one came forward.

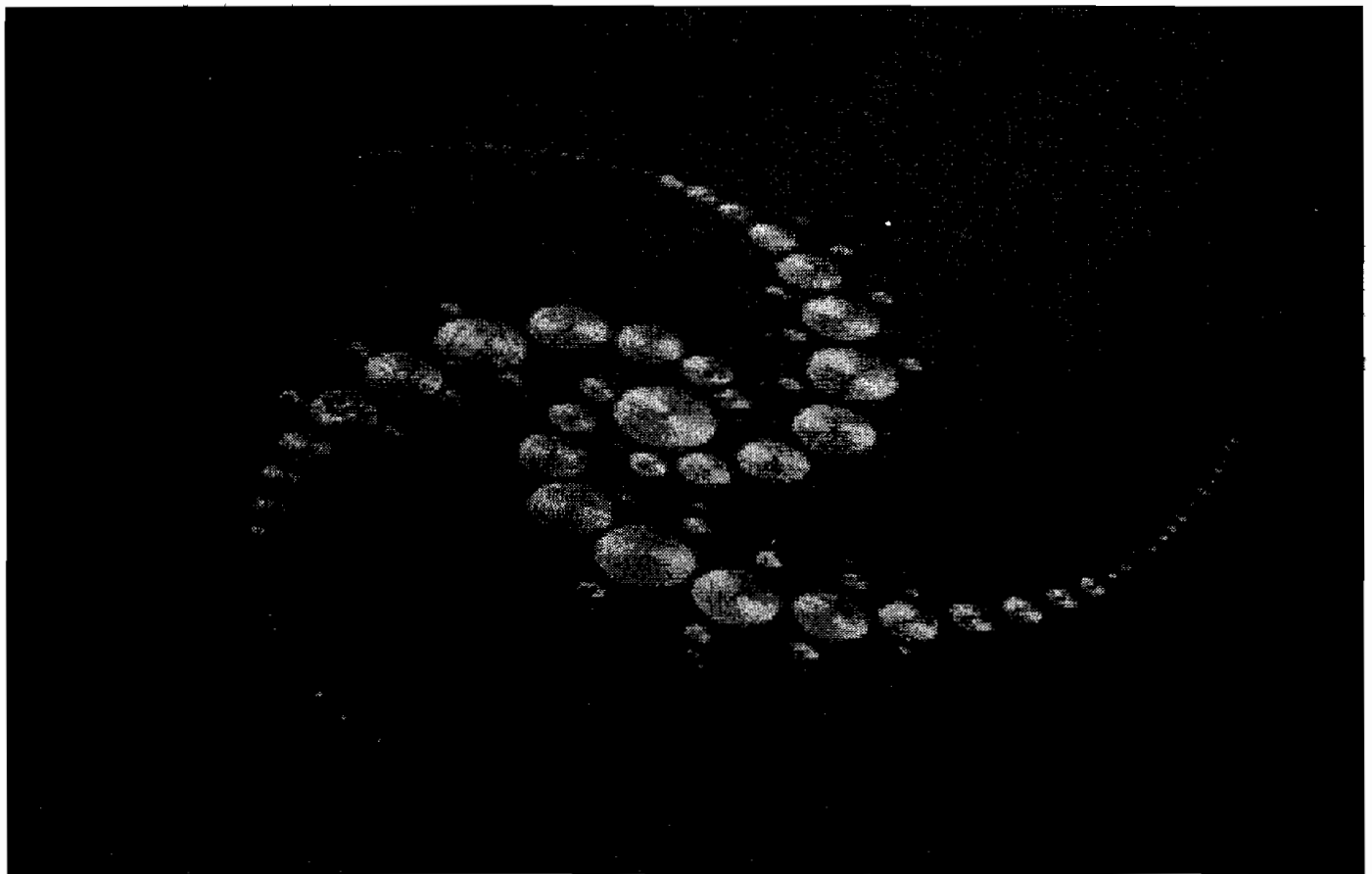
Due to the indefatigable work of Peter Sorenson from California, who has faithfully videotaped most UK crop circles since 1992, the "DNA" formation was filmed from the air and from the ground. News of the formation was soon on the Internet. The Crop Circle Connector site has details and pictures of all formations reported.

Whoever or whatever the Circlemakers are, a sense of humour seems part of the phenomenon. As if to say, "So you thought the DNA formation was good? You ain't seen nothing yet!", more was to come.

On Sunday 8th July at 5.30 pm, an air taxi pilot flew over Stonehenge. The passengers wanted to film the world-famous stone circle. No one reported seeing a crop circle. Yet, by 6.30 pm, people were already trying to enter the formation, soon to be named "the Julia Set" (a mathematical diagram which results from running fractal equations on a computer, in a similar way to the Mandelbrot Set).

The formation was 400 yards south of Stonehenge and within sight of the main London-Exeter road (A303), one of the busiest holiday routes in England. Consisting of 151 separate circles from two feet to 40 feet in diameter, and measuring 915 feet long when unravelled, "the Julia Set" became more mysterious, with investigations being conducted by Colin Andrews and others.

The formation was within sight of the 24-hour-a-day security guards at Stonehenge who reported seeing nothing unusual. It was a few miles from not only the RAF airfield at



29 July 1996: Triple-Armed Spiral, Windmill Hill, Avebury, Wiltshire, England

Boscombe Down but also one of the many Army bases on Salisbury Plain at Larkhill, both of which claimed nothing out of the ordinary had been observed.

From ground level, "the Julia Set" was too large for anyone to grasp the scale and intricacy of the layout. Only from the air could its staggering complexity and beauty be fully appreciated. As all the evidence appeared to indicate the formation was created in around 30 minutes, human involvement in its creation becomes untenable (one circle every 12 seconds!).

Initially the farmer, Philip Santel, was very angry at the damage to his wheat crop and tried to stop anyone entering his field. After seeing the aerial photographs and recognising the impossibility of keeping out visitors, he reached a solution satisfactory to every-

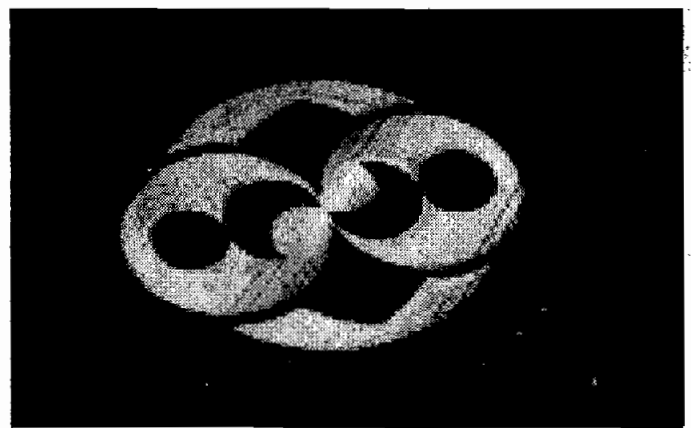
one: £2.00 and in you go! Signs were soon erected announcing "Europe's Largest Crop Circle". The A303 was frequently at a standstill as thousands of visitors parked, paid their fee and experienced—many for the first time—the wonder of being in a crop circle.

Newspapers and TV again reported this new formation, so adding to the international awareness that an unexplained phenomenon exists. At the end of July the annual Glastonbury Crop Circle Symposium took place, attracting visitors from around the world.

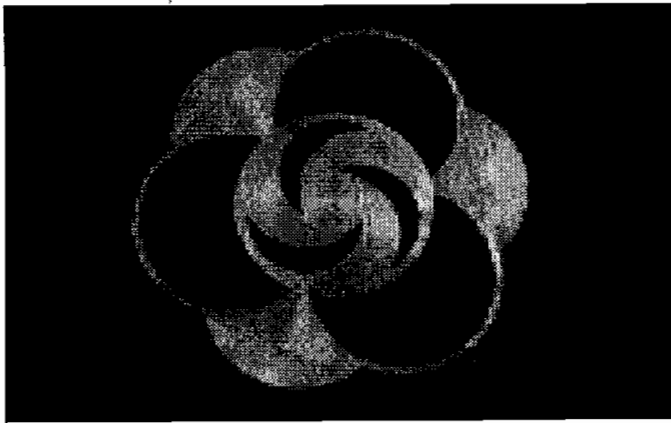
As if emboldened by the resurgence of interest, the Circlemakers continued to come up with yet more breathtaking designs: in particular, the triple-armed spiral at Windmill Hill



August 1996: Barton Le Clay, Bedfordshire, England



2 August 1996: Chiseldon, Wiltshire, England



14 July 1996: Little Bury Green, Essex, England

near Avebury, again made up from many linked circles—in this instance, 195—inside each of which remained a small tuft of crop standing in the centre.

By mid-August, over 100 formations had been reported in England, with another 40 from abroad: the USA, Canada, Finland, Germany, Austria, the Czech Republic and Holland.

This year, 1996, is already acknowledged as the best one yet for crop circles. The complexity of formations and the sheer mystery of their origins has only added to the interest of increasing numbers of people trying to make sense of the world around them. Their investigations have naturally led them to look into other similar areas of mystery and strange phenomena: UFOs, ETs, free energy, hidden history, the Face on Mars, pyramids, Atlantis,

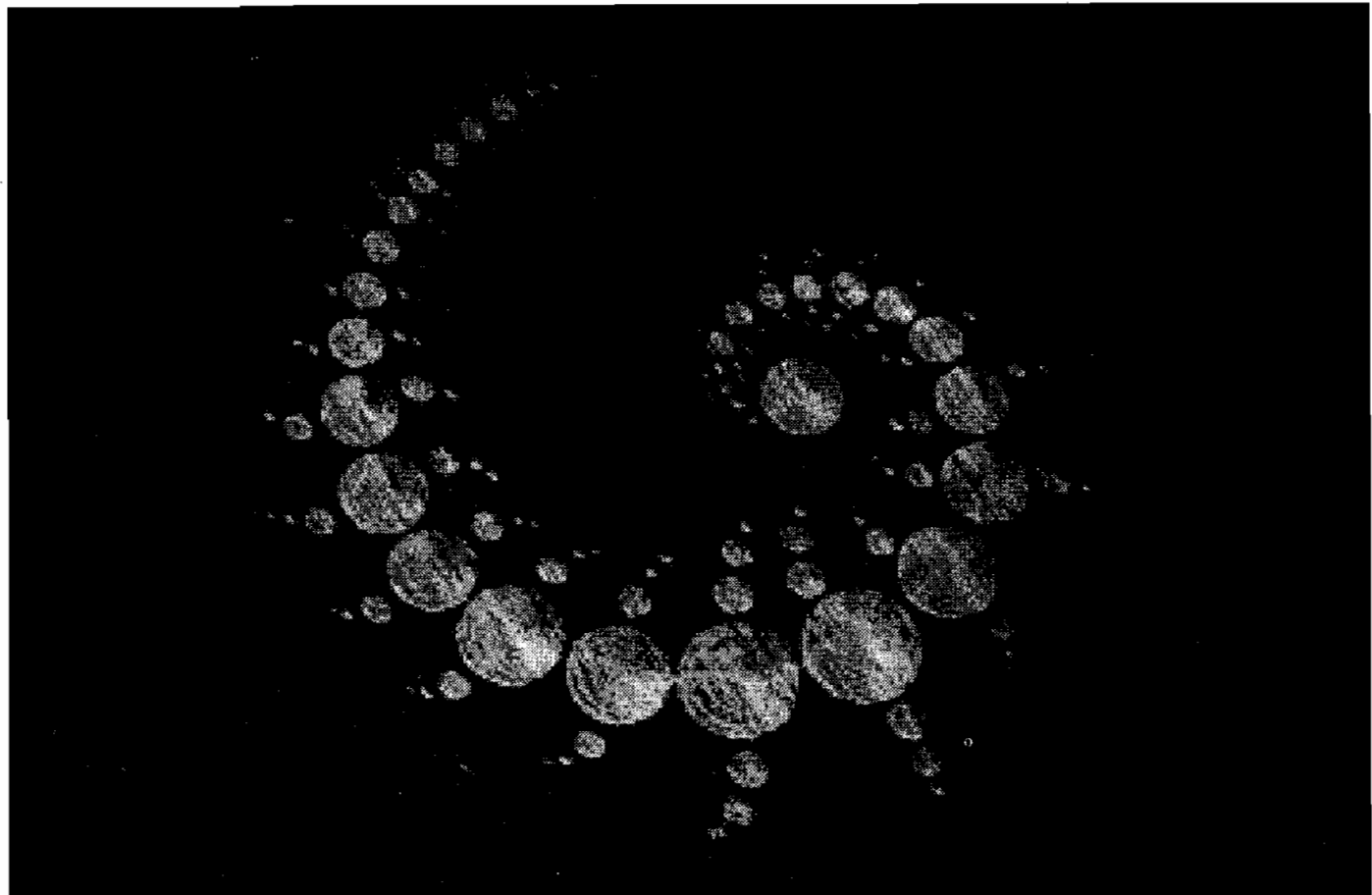


17 June 1996: "DNA", Alton Barnes, Wiltshire, England

etc., and, in doing so, they have not only met others with similar interests but discovered the huge number of books, magazines and videos already in existence which recount how truly extraordinary events are regularly reported, with convincing evidence showing other aspects of the more usually accepted explanations.

For many, the journey which may have begun with their first sight of a crop circle has already led them to discoveries which have changed forever their view of our planet. It is not only more complex than we can imagine, but far, far more dramatic. ∞

— Photographs ©1996 Stephen Alexander —
For more details on how and where to purchase these crop circle photographs, phone Steve on +44 (0)1705 352867.



8 July 1996: "The Julia Set", Stonehenge, Wiltshire, England